

Addendum B: A Selection of Gandhi's Own Call to Nonviolence (Ahimsa) and Civil Disobedience (Satyagraha)

"... I have come to this fundamental conclusion that if you want something really important to be done you must not merely satisfy the reason, you must move the heart also. The appeal of reason is more to the head but the penetration of the heart comes from suffering.^[1] It opens up the inner understanding in man. Suffering is the badge of the human race, not the sword.

"Non-violence is the law of the human race and is infinitely greater than and superior to brute force.

"In the last resort it does not avail to those who do not possess a living faith in the God of Love.

"Non-violence affords the fullest protection to one's self-respect and sense of honour, but not always to possession of land or movable property, though its habitual practice does prove a better bulwark than the possession of armed men to defend them. Non-violence in the very nature of things is of no assistance in the defence (sic) of ill-gotten gains and immoral acts.

"Individuals and nations who would practise non-violence must be prepared to sacrifice (nations to the last man) their all except honour. It is therefore inconsistent with the possession of other people's countries, i.e. modern imperialism, which is frankly based on force for its defence.

"Non-violence is a power which can be wielded equally by all children, young men and women or grown up people, provided they have a living faith in the God of Love and have therefore equal love for all mankind. When non-violence is accepted as the law of life it must pervade the whole being and not be applied to isolated acts.

"It is a profound error to suppose that whilst the law is good enough for individuals it is not for masses of mankind.

"Perfect non-violence is impossible so long as we exist physically, for we would want some space at least to occupy. Perfect non-violence whilst you are inhabiting the body is only a theory like Euclid's point or straight line, but we have to endeavour every moment of our lives.

"The doctrine of violence has reference only to the doing of injury by one to another. Suffering injury in one's own person is on the contrary of the essence of non-violence and is the chosen substitute for violence to others. It is not because I value life low that I can countenance with joy thousands voluntarily losing their lives for satyagraha, but because I know that it results in the long run in the least loss of life and what is more, it ennoble those who lose their lives and morally enriches the world for their sacrifice.

"Non-violence is 'not a resignation from all real fighting against wickedness'. On the contrary, the non-violence of my conception is a more active and real fight against wickedness than retaliation whose very nature is to increase wickedness. I contemplate, a mental and therefore a moral opposition to immoralities. I seek entirely to blunt the edge of the tyrant's sword, not by putting up against it a sharper-edged weapon, but by disappointing his expectation that I would be offering physical resistance. The resistance of the soul that I should offer would elude him. It would at first dazzle him and at last compel recognition from him, which recognition would not humiliate him but would uplift him. It may be urged that this is an ideal state. And so it is."

1 Ed: Suffering as the meaning of life is derived from the Buddhist tradition.

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